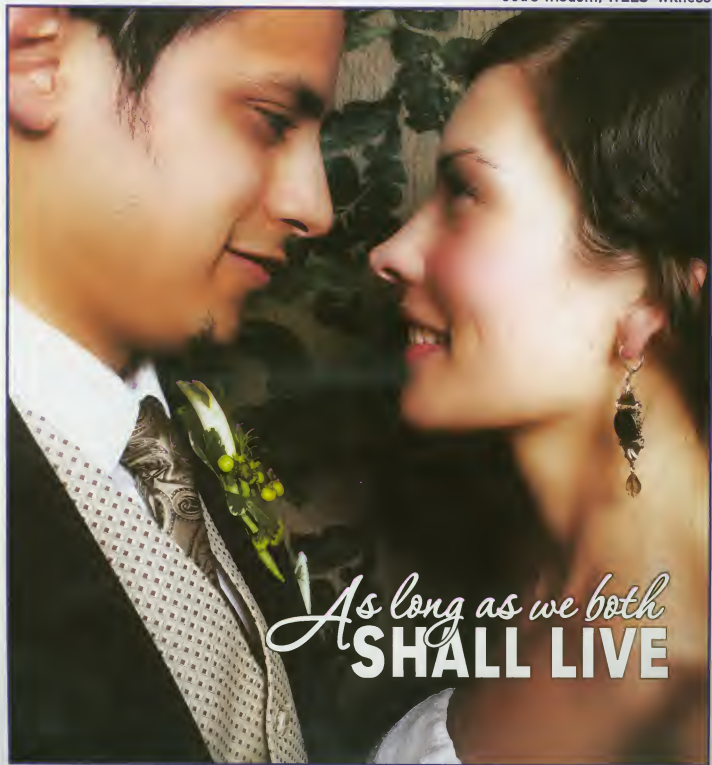


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JULY 2009

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“By definition, marriage has three important parts: leaving, being united, and becoming one flesh.”



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Forward in Christ

✝ The official magazine of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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1 Kings 8:57

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WHAT'S INSIDE

by Julie Wietzke

Summer is often a time for journeys—whether you actually travel somewhere or just try something new. Tammy Bernhard reminds us that wherever you go or whatever you do, God is with you and will direct your path (back page).

Many couples—young and old—will start their journey together with a wedding. But marriage is much more than a ceremony. This month, Lance Hoff, in the first of six articles on marriage, will explore how God characterizes marriage for a world that is trying to redefine or ignore the Bible's standards (p. 10).

About 400 delegates will journey to Saginaw, Mich., this summer to take part in WELS' 60th biennial convention. They will make many important decisions that will shape WELS ministry in upcoming years. Learn more about what they will be discussing on pp. 20-24 and keep them in your prayers. Also pray for the 42 graduates of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (pictured on pp. 16-17), many of whom are starting new calls this summer (p. 25). Enjoy your summer and all the journeys you take with the Lord.

July

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COMFORTER MINISTRY

Last year our church stopped receiving the blanket subscription to the magazine, but my husband and I decided to continue getting it. We feel we've been able to learn and grow and especially keep in contact with what other WELS churches/people are doing. We are not sorry because we have learned so much! The recent issue is just one example. I loved the article "Wrapped in God's Comfort" [April]. I am a quilter and found that article so inspiring that I am planning to contact Susanne to contribute a quilt. Living far from other WELS churches puts us at a disadvantage, but having *Forward in Christ* keeps us connected. Thank you. Keep up the good work.

Joan Guillaume
Sioux City, Iowa

The Lord called home my mother in February 2009, after a brief struggle with pancreatic cancer. I'd like to share her story of receiving a quilt.

When I visited one day at the hospital, my mom was very excited about receiving a quilt, along with a letter explaining the Comforter Ministry and a journal. I helped her put the quilt on her hospital bed, and then later the quilt was always on her bed in the nursing home. Occasionally, when she was able to sit in a chair, she was covered up with the quilt. I think we both felt that the quilt was a symbol of all our family and friends praying for her. My mom desperately wanted to

gain her strength so she could go back home, but the Lord wanted her in our heavenly home. The quilt was a blessing and comfort to her just as the April "Wrapped in God's Comfort" article mentions.

Debbie Komin
Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin

STIMULUS FOR MISSIONS

Re: the news article on the budget [May, p. 20]. The "Economic Stimulus Bill" has put an additional \$250 payment into the Social Security checks of millions of people, including my wife and myself and thousands of WELS members. At a time when over 30 graduates of our synod schools have not received calls into the ministry after years of preparation, and with dozens of mission workers facing the prospect of recalls, and with the possible closing of mission fields, what better use of this stimulus money could be made than to support sharing the gospel? That would be a real "spiritual stimulus." Join us in the project!

Frederic and Rhoda Kosonke
Hendersonville, North Carolina

FEARING DEATH?

Re: the "Question and Answer" on if it is always sinful to fear death [April].

There was an evening 35 years ago when I was filled with fear as I thought I was about to die. Why was I afraid? After all I had for years heard, "Do not be afraid." I struggled with this question for months. Did I not trust? Was my faith too small? Finally the Holy Spirit led me to another evening on a stormy lake in northern Galilee. "Master, master, we are going to drown." I realized that if even Jesus' own disciples feared death, who am I to think that I should never be afraid. Then the Holy Spirit also led me to Romans 8:38,39 and John 10:29. I am con-

vinced that nothing can separate me from God's love; no one can pluck me from his hand.

Is it sinful to fear death? Certainly, but fear is no different than any other sin. The great news is that Good Friday assures payment for all sins, and Easter Sunday assures that our loving Father "will remember [our] sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

I may be fearful when I finally do face death. But I am 100 percent certain that, at the final moment, there will be no fear as Jesus' nail-pierced hand reaches down, takes my hand, and walks me home!

Harry Rodloff
Madison, Wisconsin

BLENDED WORSHIP

Thank you for the excellent article "The Lutheran Way of Worship" [Dec. 2008] on what criteria to use in choosing songs for Lutheran worship. Steven Bode wrote, "It is the responsibility of worship planners to choose music that feeds faith with the Word of God. . . . When we sing the songs of faith—whether they've been around for years or centuries, we are well fed when we are reminded of what Christ has done for us."

Today many of our WELS churches are using blended worship. When Lutheran doctrine and gospel proclamation are blended with a contemporary musical style (perhaps with keyboard, guitar, bass, drums, singers), this too can become a Lutheran way of worship.

John Kehl
Appleton, Wisconsin

Send your letters to *Feedback*, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd., Milwaukee WI 53222; fcfb@wels.net. Letters between 100 and 200 words are preferred. Include full name and address. Letters are edited for clarity, conciseness, and relevance. Not all letters received can be acknowledged or used. Writers' views are not necessarily those of WELS or *Forward in Christ*.

Eternal life through Jesus

As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Luke 7:12-15

Stephen H. Geiger

It almost seems cruel. Tears well up in the eyes of a wife. Mournful stares grip the gazes of a mother and a father. A friend feels his chest tighten, sobbing uncontrollably.

A coffin lies at the front of your church, and one mentions with a clear and firm voice that Jesus raised the dead.

Jesus raised only three during his ministry

It almost seems cruel to speak of the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus to those seeing in their church a tiny coffin carrying a child. Jesus took Jairus' daughter by the hand and said, “My child, get up,” and she got up. But will this child do the same?

It almost seems cruel to mention to those weeping that Jesus raised the dead, because as loved ones gather at a funeral, Jesus hasn't raised their dead. He saw that poor woman who had just lost her only son. She was crying. He said to her, “Don't cry.” How could she not cry? She was all alone. Jesus touched the coffin. Those carrying it stopped. Jesus said to the young man, “Get up.” The dead man sat up. He started to talk.

But in quiet moments to come, I wonder whether that woman still felt an emptiness. You see, she had attended at least one other funeral in her life. She was a widow. Her

husband had died. And he did not sit up in his coffin.

Of all of the people that died in Jesus' three years of ministry, Scripture relates that Jesus raised only three. The widow of Nain's husband was not one of them.

Jesus gives us all eternal life

What does it mean that Jesus gave back her son but not her husband? What does it mean that Jesus, who had power over death, chose to raise only three people?

What this means is that a truly loving and powerful Messiah did not keep people on earth from dying. In fact, every person he raised during his three years of ministry ended up dying again.

Jesus' ultimate goal was not to give people eternal physical life in a sin-filled world. Jesus' goal was to free the world from all that is sin. That victory was won when he suffered death for all your evils. That victory was won when he rose, declaring you and the world free from guilt. That victory is yours to enjoy fully when, through death, you will escape all that is sin and, through resurrection, will enter bodily into bliss unimagined.

Jesus' raising of the widow's son was not done to make you think you



will never attend another funeral or to make you wonder why he isn't bringing back your loved one. He raised the widow's son to assure the widow that even if she was still alive the second time her son died, she had in Jesus a joy that goes beyond understanding and beyond death.

Not every dead person starts talking at his or her own funeral. But everyone dying in Jesus will joyfully talk again.

Contributing editor Stephen Geiger, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Risen Savior, Milwaukee.

For the next generation

Paul T. Prange

Attending Sunday school throughout my childhood, I learned the Bible's account of creation. I knew what was created on each of the six days, and I came to understand that human beings are the crown of God's creation, the objects of his special love.

Attending excellent public elementary and middle schools, where the very best principles of modern education were practiced, I learned the current theories of evolution. I knew all of the eras, which fossils were common in each era, and how old the earth really was.

My eighth-grade ears then heard things in confirmation class that did not jibe with what I had heard in school, and my eighth-grade brain came up with a solution. I was pretty sure that each of the days of creation was really a billion years. I wondered why no one had come up with such an elegant solution.

In ninth grade I attended a Lutheran school for the first time. Early in the curriculum, the subject of the origin of

the world came up. In those days of Lutheran school, the preferred method of teaching was lecture, and in the lecture the teacher introduced the idea that each of the days of creation was really a much longer time period. I sat up straight in my desk, ready to support the teacher in this obvious solution. Imagine my surprise when he told us, "This heresy is called theistic evolution." I don't suppose that anyone in the room knew why I was blushing.

Today I know that the human brain will naturally harmonize two conflicting ideas unless one of them is specifically pointed out as untenable. I realize in my own work as a Lutheran educator

that false ideas must be identified so that they can be disproven by Scripture rather than combined with the truth.

Today I see the value of Lutheran education from cradle to grave in order to raise up the next generation with the truths of the Bible clearly in mind. If the basic principles of evolution are mixed into our understanding, we tend to see human beings as constantly improving rather than steeped in sin. If the principles of the Bible are the basis for our view of the world, we will see sinful human beings as souls in need of the Savior. And we will have the background to present the Savior as he presents himself to us in Word and sacraments.

The difference between the market-driven humanism of secular education and the Spirit-driven focus on God and his gifts in Lutheran education is extraordinary, affecting every part of our lives.

As the gospel is taken to each new place and passed on to each new generation, the Christians of those places and times realize the tremendous investment Lutheran education takes. That investment is worthwhile. We join with the hymn writer in thanking God for the

people who have realized that truth in the past and still realize it today: "Our fathers knew and kept in view true wisdom's worth and pleasure; they prized as jewels their Christian schools and left a lasting treasure" (*Christian Worship* 511:2).

Contributing editor Paul Prange, administrator for the WELS Board for Ministerial Education, is a member at St. John, Burlington, Wisconsin.

I see the value of Lutheran education from cradle to grave in order to raise up the next generation with the truths of the Bible clearly in mind.

QUESTION & ANSWER



Forrest L. Bivens

You are right in saying that stem cell research seems to offer potential blessing and that it's sometimes considered unethical or immoral. This sounds like a strange combination.

What are stem cells?

Stem cells are "nonspecialized" cells that have the capacity to mature into a variety of tissue. Some, such as embryonic cells, are human "master" cells that have the potential to grow into any one of the body's more than 200 cell types, like those of human organs, bones, and tissues. Using stem cells seems to offer great potential for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injuries, and strokes. Because of their ability to grow into almost any kind of cell, the hope is to replace damaged cells with them. Brain cells damaged by strokes or organ cells hurt by radiation or chemotherapy, for example, might be replaced with healthy stem cells that adapt to the affected area and become fully functioning healthy cells. No wonder billions of dollars are being poured into this research!

Where do they come from?

Stem cells come from three main sources: adult cells (especially bone marrow), umbilical cords (extracted during pregnancy and stored in cell banks similar to blood banks), and embryos (extracted from laboratory-fertilized human eggs during the earliest stages of life when the embryo is referred to as a blastocyst).

There is no shortage of adult or umbilical cord stem cells for research purposes. But obtaining these types of cells can take precious time, involve expensive procedures, and involve some painful isolation of bone marrow. These cells also have limited potency or adaptability and can result in some rejection by immune systems when attempts are made to insert them into another human. Researchers understandably look toward embryonic cells as a rich source of stem cells that can be kept alive indefinitely, grown in cultures, and used to produce all kinds of human cells.

Q. What is wrong with stem cell research? It seems to promise much good.

Much of the debate has to do with federal funding assistance for stem cell research, especially when using embryonic cells. Our focus here is on the moral issues involved.

When is this wrong?

Those who believe that human life begins at the point of conception oppose embryonic stem cell research because the extraction of stem cells from this type of an embryo requires its destruction. The use of blastocysts from fertility clinics—"leftovers" from in-vitro fertilization procedures—is another debated aspect of the industry. The central issue remains: a human life (the blastocyst) must be killed, and this is immoral and unacceptable. Embryonic research advocates argue that the tiny blastocyst has no "human features" like more developed embryos and fetuses have. Opponents cite repeated biblical references to the unborn in all stages of development as real human beings protected by the prohibition "You shall not murder." These references include Psalm 51:5: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (cf. Psalm 139:13-16; Luke 1:35-37, 41-44).

Concerns about embryonic stem cell research have been raised based on medical rather than moral reasons. But the primary concern of the Christian community remains: the research—with potential therapeutic benefits—comes at a cost of human embryonic lives.

When President Obama recently removed restrictions on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research, this was applauded by those who advocate this research. But others cited the action as moral abdication and short-sighted pragmatism that reflected a lack of medical ethics. This public debate makes your question and its answer all the more important for us all.

Contributing editor Forrest Bivens, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Calvary, Thiensville.

God's plan for your **MARRIAGE**



Society today wants to change what marriage is. We need to remember God's three-part definition: "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

Lance A. Hoff

"**M**arriage is totally irrelevant to today's society," a lecturer in sociology claimed at a sex education seminar for youth. You would have to be blind not to see that someone wants to change the definition of marriage in our society. The family has become a vanishing species not only on the TV screen, but on Main Street too. Are marriage and the family a pliable putty that society can mold to any form it wants?

As God's people, we need to go back to the beginning where marriage began, where God established it. When one reads Genesis 2, it becomes clear that marriage and the family definitely are not a development or custom created for the convenience of society.

God created marriage

Marriage was in the creative mind of God on that sixth day of creation when he made us. God concluded, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). As Adam named all of the animals, it became painfully clear that God had created him incomplete. Something was missing. I often wonder if God wasn't helping Adam to appreciate that Eve was a most precious gift.

And then the first surgery took place. When Adam awoke from his God-given anesthetic, there she was!

Adam had just named all of the animals. What would Adam name this new creation, which had been taken from himself? "She shall be called 'woman'" (v. 23). Adam literally said "she-man" or the "she-version of me." Adam recognized that this one before him was the same as he was, yet very different.

She was created from Adam's rib. It seems that God created the woman in this unique way to demonstrate the close relationship between man and his "she-man." They were designed to complement each other and fit together. Marriage is built right into the design of man and woman.

We can actually say that there was no time in the history of the world when there was no marriage. It is part of the blueprints. You can't remove it any more than you can remove the main beam in your house and expect it to still stand.

In the next breath God inspired the holy writer Moses to add a comment, "For this reason"—in other words, because that is the way God created man and woman—"a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (v. 24). By definition, marriage has three important parts: leaving, being united, and becoming one flesh.

The leaving

Marriage is even stronger and closer than the natural parental relationship. Every parent knows that a day will come when little boys and girls will leave. It may make us parents feel good to have our children rely on us. It feels good to be needed. But the worst possible thing we can do for our children is to make them always dependent on us. That handicaps them for marriage. Perhaps one of the best wedding gifts parents can give to their children is to teach them responsibility and then at the proper time let them go.

Mothers-in-law, beware. Don't stick your nose where it is not wanted. An old German proverb says, "The mother-in-law has forgotten that once she was a daughter-in-law." Young people, beware. Don't enter a marriage with someone who is still tied to his or her mother's apron strings. God intended marriage to be a definite leaving. Husband and wife need to rely on one another, not their moms and dads.

Isn't that one purpose of the wedding ceremony? To announce to the whole community that such a leaving is taking place. A brand new responsible family has joined the community—a new building block of society.

The being united

God also intended the "uniting" of man and his woman. The Hebrew word used there is fascinating. A man will be stuck to his wife—glued, soldered together. Obviously the kind of glue many are using today doesn't work. Our world's concept of marriage is built on a rather flimsy idea of romantic love. God doesn't have anything against romantic or sexual attraction, after all he created it! But that is not enough to make a man and a woman stick together. All too often the wedding vows are interpreted to mean, "I will be faithful to you till death do us part or until our love grows cold, whichever comes first."

God's idea is total commitment: glued, cemented, welded together. Marriage by its Creator's definition is a permanent uniting. In marriage, two people are not merely zipped, buttoned, or bolted together so they can be easily unzipped, unbuttoned, or unbolted when it's convenient by a no-fault divorce. They are superglued—welded one into the other—by a covenant of total commitment.

The becoming one flesh

God places the privilege of the sexual union with its ever-present possibility of children into that secure, permanent relationship and only within that relationship. God says, "They will become one flesh." The sexual union is not a toy

to be played with; it is not a function of the human body like eating or drinking. The one-flesh union is intended by God to be the ultimate expression of all that has gone before: the leaving and uniting. It expresses and cements the full commitment of the man and the woman. The two are totally one—a part of each other, with their children a combination of their genetic material and product of their love.

Please note the order:

1) leaving, 2) uniting, 3) becoming one flesh. God did not ordain that we be like animals and do a lot of becoming one flesh with whomever we desire, whenever we desire, and then when we finally get stuck on one, we decide to get married. That might make television and movie scripts, but not God's script for marriage.

The living together phenomenon that is so popular today cuts the heart out of marriage. Those who live together before marriage are much more apt to divorce. It's no wonder—they did it all wrong from the beginning. Certainly the grace of God can heal our mistakes, but we do not sin so that grace may increase (Romans 6:1,2).

According to God's definition of marriage, each of the three parts supports and protects the other, just as in a triangle each side supports and holds up the other. A husband and wife announce that they are leaving their separate homes to form a new family unit. The proper leaving supports the commitment

to each other. That commitment protects the intimacy of the sexual union. It provides a safe and secure place for the total giving of oneself in the sexual union. Marriage is not just a piece of paper as so many like to say today.

God created man and woman for marriage and created marriage to be the greatest earthly blessing for us. No one can improve on God's plan.

Lance Hoff is pastor at St. Peter, Helenville, Wisconsin.

This is the first article in a six-part series on marriage.





ALL NEW CREATIONS

Sin can overwhelm the free will God has restored in each of us. With the gospel we daily renew the fight.

Brett A. Brauer

The Bible teaches that sinful humans cannot cooperate in becoming Christians. They lack a free will to choose to believe in Christ. Every person is born with an enslaved will in spiritual matters.

After the Holy Spirit turns sinful unbelievers into Christians, how much can those Christians then contribute in making spiritual decisions and in living for Christ? In this matter the Bible teaches that we Christians can and do contribute, although with great weakness. As long as we live here on the earth, we are weakened by the sin still living inside of us. Yet each of us also has a restored free will that wants to live for our Savior.

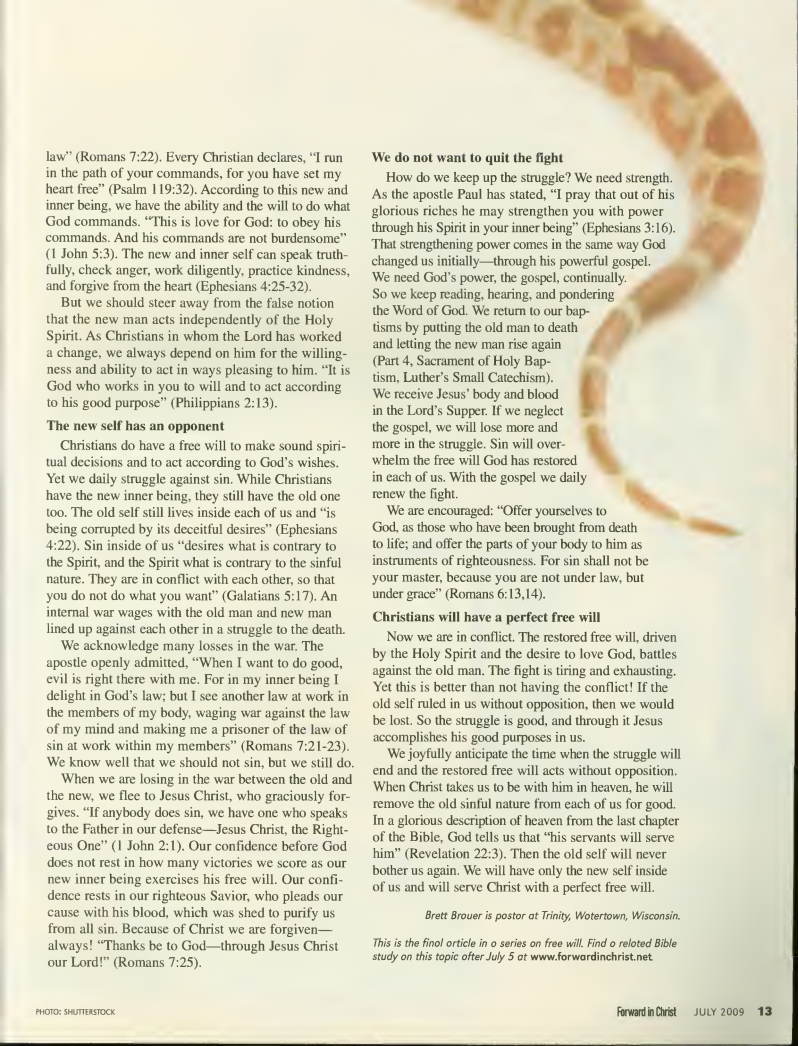
Christians are a new creation

Christians have God to thank for the presence of a free will. He worked a great change in us, because sin left us totally dead, ignorant, and in darkness. "Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions" (Ephesians 2:4,5). Just as God will work a miracle when he raises dead bodies, so he worked a miracle when he made us spiritually alive. Through the Holy Spirit's power, we believe in Jesus and joyfully confess him as our Lord and

Savior (1 Corinthians 12:3). We give God all the credit for what he has done.

At our baptisms God made us new creatures who love him and delight to do whatever he commands. In the Scriptures we are encouraged "to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). In a similar statement from God's Word, we are told that we "have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:10). By his power God restores his image in believers—an image he created in humans in the beginning. It reappears in the new self.

This "new self," also called the "new man" or the "inner being," loves God and his commands. The apostle wrote, "In my inner being I delight in God's



law" (Romans 7:22). Every Christian declares, "I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free" (Psalm 119:32). According to this new and inner being, we have the ability and the will to do what God commands. "This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). The new and inner self can speak truthfully, check anger, work diligently, practice kindness, and forgive from the heart (Ephesians 4:25-32).

But we should steer away from the false notion that the new man acts independently of the Holy Spirit. As Christians in whom the Lord has worked a change, we always depend on him for the willingness and ability to act in ways pleasing to him. "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

The new self has an opponent

Christians do have a free will to make sound spiritual decisions and to act according to God's wishes. Yet we daily struggle against sin. While Christians have the new inner being, they still have the old one too. The old self still lives inside each of us and "is being corrupted by its deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). Sin inside of us "desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (Galatians 5:17). An internal war wages with the old man and new man lined up against each other in a struggle to the death.

We acknowledge many losses in the war. The apostle openly admitted, "When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members" (Romans 7:21-23). We know well that we should not sin, but we still do.

When we are losing in the war between the old and the new, we flee to Jesus Christ, who graciously forgives. "If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). Our confidence before God does not rest in how many victories we score as our new inner being exercises his free will. Our confidence rests in our righteous Savior, who pleads our cause with his blood, which was shed to purify us from all sin. Because of Christ we are forgiven—always! "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25).

We do not want to quit the fight

How do we keep up the struggle? We need strength. As the apostle Paul has stated, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). That strengthening power comes in the same way God changed us initially—through his powerful gospel. We need God's power, the gospel, continually. So we keep reading, hearing, and pondering the Word of God. We return to our baptisms by putting the old man to death and letting the new man rise again (Part 4, Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Luther's Small Catechism). We receive Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper. If we neglect the gospel, we will lose more and more in the struggle. Sin will overwhelm the free will God has restored in each of us. With the gospel we daily renew the fight.

We are encouraged: "Offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:13,14).


Christians will have a perfect free will

Now we are in conflict. The restored free will, driven by the Holy Spirit and the desire to love God, battles against the old man. The fight is tiring and exhausting. Yet this is better than not having the conflict! If the old self ruled in us without opposition, then we would be lost. So the struggle is good, and through it Jesus accomplishes his good purposes in us.

We joyfully anticipate the time when the struggle will end and the restored free will acts without opposition. When Christ takes us to be with him in heaven, he will remove the old sinful nature from each of us for good. In a glorious description of heaven from the last chapter of the Bible, God tells us that "his servants will serve him" (Revelation 22:3). Then the old self will never bother us again. We will have only the new self inside of us and will serve Christ with a perfect free will.

Brett Brauer is pastor at Trinity, Watertown, Wisconsin.

This is the final article in a series on free will. Find a related Bible study on this topic after July 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net



What do jumping out of airplanes and preaching God's Word have in common? For Juan José Olvera, a lot. "I love strong emotions," he says.

After serving in the Mexican military for nine years, he now spends his time sharing the gospel with others as a pastor in the Mexican Lutheran Church, a sister synod to WELS. "Evangelism is my new passion," he explains. "It's what gets me fired up."

Back to kindergarten

The gospel was not always front and center in Juan José's life. "For a long time, I didn't want to have anything to do with Christian churches," he says. "I believed in Jesus, but I had no desire to belong to a congregation. They all seemed so rigid."

Growing up, Juan José and his family did not regularly attend church. "My mom and her family are Catholic, but only in the traditional sense," he explains. "On my dad's side, all of my uncles are either Catholic priests or in the military."

Juan José's dad was in the military, and the family moved around for a number of years before settling in Juárez, a northern city that borders Texas. Juan José went to grade school and middle school there and took martial arts classes during his free time.

When he was 13 years old, Juan José found a Baptist church and started going to events there on his own. "I stayed in the Baptist church for about 10 years," he says. "But I had problems with its legalistic structure and eventually left."

Following in his dad's steps, Juan José joined the military and became part of a Special Forces unit. After nine years of service, however, he decided to switch careers. Combining his training from the military with his martial arts background, he started teaching kickboxing classes. He also worked as a professional wrestler.

During this time, Juan José became a family man. He married his girlfriend Claudia, and they had a baby girl named Johana. The three of them lived in Juárez.

After awhile, his wife became homesick. "Claudia is from Torreón, and she wanted to be closer to her parents," he explains. "We moved there, and I rented a small place for my business."

Confessions of faith

Why are you a member of WELS? What does this church body have that makes it unique from hundreds of others? In this series, you will read about why some choose to join WELS and what members treasure most about being WELS.

Rachel Hartman

Juan José didn't know it at the time, but he set up shop on the same block as the Lutheran church *El Redentor* (Redeemer). One day he and his family walked past the church. A few members came out and greeted them. "They recognized Claudia because she had gone to kindergarten there," Juan José recalls.

Shortly after running into the members, Claudia asked Juan José if they could go to a Sunday service. Johana was now two years old, and Claudia wanted to see if the church offered anything for little ones. Juan José agreed to go.

Members told Juan José and Claudia that the church was going to hold a summer Bible school for kids in the neighborhood. Juan José wanted to find out more about the school. "I went to ask for more information, and that's when I met Pastor Sánchez," he says.

Answers from the Bible

Pastor Esequiel Sánchez, who serves the *El Redentor* congregation, and Juan José hit it off right away. They soon became good friends. They spent hours talking about things like church and the Bible.

"It was the first time a church had answered my questions using only the Bible," Juan José notes. "I brought all of my concerns to Pastor Sánchez, including the reasons I hadn't baptized my daughter yet. He kept pointing me to the Bible for the answers. There wasn't any human reason mixed in the teaching."

When he first met Sánchez, Juan José had strong feelings against getting involved with any church. As they spent time together though, he had a change of heart. "Everything happened so naturally. All of a sudden I was studying Bible information classes with Pastor Sánchez."

Juan José was so interested that some days he studied between six and eight hours with Sánchez. "I



Clockwise: Juan José, Claudia, Maria, and Johana.

think I finished the course in about 20 days. It may have been a record," he jokes.

While they studied, Sánchez noticed Juan José's strong leadership skills and love for the gospel. He started talking to Juan José about the possibility of becoming a pastor.

"At first I really didn't want to have anything to do with being a pastor," says Juan José. "But Pastor Sánchez and I had become good friends, almost from the start. One day I went around with him, just as a friend, and saw what he did all day. I observed the job of a pastor firsthand. It got me thinking that maybe I could do something like that too."

Becoming a pastor

Entering the seminary turned out to be even more exciting than taking membership classes. Suddenly, Juan José was getting a bigger dose of what it meant to be a Lutheran. "I can remember the day I got my Greek grammar book," he says. "It was a very exciting time."

At the time he enrolled, the Mexican Lutheran Church was just starting to put together an established seminary campus. Classes were held right at *El Redentor*. "We used a table that was in

the back of church, one that held flyers and bulletins for worship," says Juan José. "On Mondays we would clear off the table and move it to the front, right between the first pew and the altar. On Friday, we'd put the flyers back and move the table to its original place for Sunday worship."

Juan José studied at the seminary for four years and graduated in 2005. Now that he is a pastor in the Lutheran church, he feels more charged up than ever before. "I love evangelism," he says. "I love going from house to house, neighborhood to neighborhood, telling people about Jesus. I can show them how Jesus can change their entire life."

One of the best parts about being in the Lutheran church for Juan José is the emphasis on the Word of God. "We have some wonderfully gifted pastors in our synod," he says. "But the really great thing about each one of them is their knowledge and use of the Bible. That's what this church is centered on."

Juan José and Claudia now have two daughters and live in the Torreón area. Juan José is doing what he does best—evangelizing—at a congregation in Gomez Palacio, a twin city of Torreón. His love for the gospel motivates him, day after day, to share his story with others.

"God's Word has really changed me," he concludes. "I used to be more aggressive, but now I'm dominated by the power of God's Word. I am so grateful for Jesus. He changed my life, he changed my marriage, and he keeps changing everything for the better."

Rochel Horton serves with her husband, Missionary Mike Horton, in Torreón, Mexico.

Do you have a story to share about how you became a WELS member? Send it to Forward in Christ, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sob.wels.net.

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN Seminary graduates

At the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduation service on May 22, 42 graduates received diplomas for successfully completing their seminary studies. Look for where they were assigned on p. 25.



G. Philip Arnold Jr.
Woodstock, Ga.



Jeremiah W. Bockhous
Kenoi, Ala.



David J. Barkow
Green Bay, Wis.



Thomas J. Barthel
De Pere, Wis.



Noah M. Boter
Lonsing, Mich.



Nothaniel J. Biebert
Neillsville, Wis.



M. John Dermé
Des Moines, Wash.



Brian K. Diring
Windsor, Wis.



Benjamin A. Enstod
Andover, Minn.



Patrick G. Feldhus
Pawtucket, R.I.



Adam S. Gowel
Midland, Mich.



Kurt W. Hogen
Appleton, Wis.



Eric S. Honsen
Kiel, Wis.



Noah M. Headrick
Monitowoc, Wis.



David T. Horton
Wotertown, Wis.



Kelly B. Huet
Phoenix, Ariz.



Janathon M. Klein
Lake Mills, Wis.



Joseph D. Koelpin
Mequon, Wis.



Shane C. Krause
New London, Wis.



Stephen M. Kruschel
Redwood Falls, Minn.



Stephen P. Kuehl
Hartford, Wis.



Kirk E. Lahmann
Owosso, Mich.



Jeremy D. Laitinen
New Ulm, Minn.



Jonathan A. Learman
Peshtigo, Wis.



Nau Xiang Lee*
Manitowoc, Wis.



Stephen C. Lehmann
Janesville, Wis.



Paa Maua*
St. Paul, Minn.



Adam F. Nitz
Slades Corners, Wis.



Mark R. Parsons
Montrose, Colo.



Timothy J. Redfield
Oconomowoc, Wis.



David R. Rosenau
Jackson, Wis.



Benjamin P. Schaefer
Blaine, Minn.



Kevin P. Schnake
Findlay, Ohio



Andrew B. Schroeder
Hemet, Calif.



Aaron D. Schumann
Prior Lake, Minn.



Matthew J. Sprunger
Bay City, Mich.



John M. Stelter
Montello, Wis.



Joel T. Sutton
New Ulm, Minn.



Thomas Changchua Thao*
Appleton, Wis.



Matthew T. Vik
Appleton, Wis.



Brian S. Weinkauf
Mukwonago, Wis.



Nathaniel J. Winkel
Muskegon, Mich.

*a graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary through the Asian Ministry Training Program, a satellite program under the auspices of the Pastoral Studies Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

True veritas

James Goldschmidt

A Harvard student revisits the importance of knowing that any "truth" we learn about the world is only part of God's larger truth.

Three years ago when I was asked by *Forward in Christ* to write about my Christian experience at Harvard College, I had just completed my first year there. Looking back at what I wrote, I see that I was generally optimistic about the openness of Harvard's students to new ideas. When people—students or otherwise—genuinely believe that "anything goes," then one's beliefs may be received with respect but will never be valued as the truth.

The question of truth is central at Harvard, a fact echoed by the school's motto: "*Veritas*," the Latin word for truth. Yet here, in an academic institution with the largest academic library in the world, the longest institutional history in the United States, and the single wealthiest endowment of any university in the country, truth can be very hard to find.

Harvard is a place that echoes Pilate's age-old question: "What is truth?" (John 18:38). To my ears, Pilate's question is one of resignation in a world that had lost its way. In the same way that he washed his hands of Jesus' fate, Pilate decided that defining truth was not for him. If one man standing before him claimed to have the answers,

this did not change the fact that Pilate had heard similar claims from many men before Christ.

Then as now, the world must have been full of people claiming that their way was the only way. Who was he to choose from among them?

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus spoke these words

with a desire to comfort his disciples before his impending suffering and death. Just a few verses before this, he said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1). As followers of Christ, we know that his words are true and that they bring comfort in this frightening, confusing, and often painful life. Without the certain knowledge of our salvation in Christ, imagine the anxiety we would feel!

This is precisely why I am not surprised to see such a frenzied pursuit of learning here at Harvard and at other similar institutions: Everyone is still seeking the elusive answer to Pilate's question. But in 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds us that when anyone—whether an institution or an individual—chooses "the wisdom of this world" over "the message of the cross," the opportunity for a real education in Christ has been replaced by "foolishness" in God's eyes—in Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes, "a chasing after the wind." Knowing this, I often wonder what God must think of all the effort exerted by those who do not recognize him as the answer to all of our deepest questions. After all, we could learn all there is to learn about this world and still know nothing about the next!

Does this mean that I view my time spent at Harvard as wasted? Of course not; I believe one can receive a wonderful education at any school—parochial, synodical, or secular—as long as one never fails to remember that any "truth" we learn about the world is only part of God's larger truth and may be turned on its head when we reach heaven.

In the meantime, we have the blessing of knowing the answer to Pilate's question and the response to the relativism that is only increasing in this world. We should pray daily for those still waiting for the peace found in God's truth, a peace that "transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

James Goldschmidt, a senior at Harvard, is a member at Pinewood (ELS), Burlington, Massachusetts.

Obituaries

Robert James Voss, 1928–2009

Robert Voss was born Nov. 1, 1928, in Fond du Lac, Wis. He died March 24, 2009, in Clare, Mich.

A graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at St. John, Clare, Mich.; St. John, Gladwin, Mich.; Salem, Coloma, Mich.; and St. John, Libertyville, Ill.

He is preceded in death by his first wife, Ardelle; one grandson; and one sister. He is survived by his second wife, Jan; 2 sons; 2 daughters; 2 stepdaughters; 11 grandchildren; 4 stepgrandchildren; and 4 great-grandchildren.

Paul G. Schwartz, 1928–2008

Paul G. Schwartz was born Nov. 7, 1928, in Watertown, Wis. He died Dec. 17, 2008, in Chaseburg, Wis.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at Peace, Green Lake, Wis.; St. John, Juneau, Wis.; and First, La Crosse, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Karleen. He is survived by two sons, one daughter, and nine grandchildren.

Walter August Schultz, 1937–2009

Walter Schultz was born July 10, 1937. He died March 29, 2009.

He taught at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, Wis.

He is survived by his wife, Ermette; 2 sons; 2 daughters; 12 grandchildren; and 1 brother.

Margaret Ellyn Scharf, 1964–2009

Peggi (nee Nath) Scharf was born Feb. 15, 1964, in Milwaukee, Wis. She died April 2, 2009, in Milwaukee, Wis.

She taught at Mt. Calvary, La Crosse, Wis.

She is survived by her husband, Bill; one son; her mother; and two brothers.

Roland Waldemar Bernhardt Ehlke, 1915–2009

Roland Ehlke was born Dec. 6, 1915. He died April 7, 2009.

He served at St. John, Two Rivers, Wis. and Resurrection, Milwaukee, Wis.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Mary, and one brother. He is survived by 2 sons, 1 daughter, 14 grandchildren, one sister, and many great-grandchildren.

Terry Franklin Geisler, 1951–2009

Terry Geisler was born Oct. 3, 1951, in St. Joseph, Mich. He died April 25, 2009, in St. Joseph, Mich.

A graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., he taught at St. John, Waterloo, Wis.

He is survived by his parents; his wife, Sharon; two sons; two daughters; three grandchildren; one brother; and two sisters.

David C. Karnitz, 1952–2009

David Karnitz was born Nov. 17, 1952, in Minneapolis, Minn. He died April 27, 2009, in St. Louis Park, Minn.

He taught at Trinity, Hoskins, Neb.; St. John, Dakota, Minn.; Our Savior, Wausau, Wis.; and St. Paul, Lake Mills, Wis.

He is survived by his parents and two brothers.

David P. Worgull, 1928–2009

David Worgull was born March 19, 1928, in Milwaukee, Wis. He died April 27, 2009, in Phoenix, Ariz.

A 1952 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., he served at Lutheran Apache Mission, Cibecue, Ariz.; St. Paul, Naper, Neb.; St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.; Rockwood, Manitowoc, Wis.; Bethel, Menasha, Wis.; Manitowoc Lutheran High School, Manitowoc, Wis.; and Calvary, Chandler, Ariz. He also served as the WELS statistician for 22 years and as the synod secretary for 11 years.

He is preceded in death by one brother and two sisters. He is survived by his wife, Marion; 2 sons; 2 daughters; 11 grandchildren; and 6 great-grandchildren.

Through my Bible

IN 3 YEARS

08/2009

1. Job 11, 12	17. Ps. 44
2. Job 13, 14	18. Ps. 45
3. Job 15–17	19. Ps. 46–48
4. Job 18, 19	20. Ps. 49
5. Job 20, 21	21. Ps. 50
6. Job 22–24	22. Ps. 51
7. Job 25–27	23. 2 Samuel 1
8. Job 28, 29	24. 2 Sam. 2, 3
9. Job 30, 31	25. 2 Sam. 4:1–5:16
10. Job 32, 33	26. 2 Sam. 5:17–6:23
11. Job 34, 35	27. 2 Sam. 7
12. Job 36, 37	28. 2 Sam. 8, 9
13. Job 38:1–40:5	29. 2 Sam. 10, 11
14. Job 40:6–42:6	30. 2 Sam. 12:1–13:37
15. Job 42:7–17	31. 2 Sam. 13:38–14:33
16. Psalm 42, 43	

Charting our synod's direction

Approximately 400 WELS pastors, teachers, staff ministers, and laymen from around the country will travel to Saginaw, Mich., July 27-31 to represent their congregations at this summer's synod convention—WELS' legislative body that meets every other year to establish, review, and amend the policies and direction of the synod.

Unlike organizations run by a CEO or board of directors, in WELS the

they vote on what WELS should be doing for the Lord.

"It's probably the best place, for the delegates especially, to get an overall view of practically everything we do as a synod in a very short time," says Schroeder. "It's an educational experience as well as a ministry experience."

Lay delegate Gary Warskow, member at Lamb of God, Phoenix, Ariz., says he is looking forward to his first

says. "My hope and prayer is that there's not a lot of divisiveness and that people can come to a consensus and move forward with the best plan that God would have us do."

Teacher delegate William Pekrul, member at St. John, New Ulm, Minn., saw the delegate process at work when he was a delegate at the 1993 convention. "It's hard to convey just how hard the delegates work, how much discussion goes on, and how people are open to hearing the various sides of the issues and working through them," he says. "Delegates also dedicate themselves to significant periods of time throughout the convention for Bible study, prayer, and general worship. The atmosphere at the convention is something that really makes a difference."

He says one of the challenges will be to convey that convention atmosphere to congregations. "It's great that people are passionate about their local ministries and getting the Word of Christ to the people within their communities, but sometimes I think that passion for the local ministry can overshadow the work of the church as a whole," says Pekrul. "I think it's important for us to be able to give perspective to people in our congregations as to how the work they are doing in their hometown is connected to the work of the church as a whole."

Schroeder says he hopes that spirit of togetherness will be present at this year's synod convention and beyond. "One of the things coming out of convention is just an affirmation of where our true unity lies—and that's based squarely and completely on the truth of God's Word," he says. "Once the discussion is finished and the vote is taken, we all leave the convention, going together as one."

Issues at this year's convention include the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Commission and the synod budget proposal. See pp. 22-24 for details. Watch the July edition of WELS Connection for more pre-convention coverage



This year's synod convention will be held July 27-31 at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

convention is the ultimate authority. "The convention is extremely important because it gives all of our congregations and all of our members, through their representatives, the ability to guide and direct the ministry that we carry out together," says WELS President Mark Schroeder. "It's a broad-based, grassroots, decision-making process that puts important decisions in the hands of the people of the synod."

While at convention, delegates hear from synod leaders and administrators about the work being done in WELS; they also listen to and participate in discussions regarding specific issues brought before the convention. Finally,

convention experience. To prepare, he's been reading through pre-convention information and asking members of congregations in the area which direction they'd like to see the synod take. "I'm elated that I was considered to be a delegate," he says. "And now I have an important opportunity, being that I'm representing a large number of people from my district."

As a member of the floor committee that will be discussing the Ad Hoc Commission's recommendations to strengthen congregations, Warskow says he's anticipating long hours and packed days at the convention. "I'm hoping that things go smoothly," he

Theme sets tone for convention

The theme of this year's convention and the phrase chosen by WELS leaders to identify our synod into the future is "Christ's Love, Our Calling." WELS President Mark Schroeder says those two little phrases encompass everything God has done for us—and our joyful response.

"Everything we are as individuals and everything we are as a church really flows from God's love to us in Christ," he says. "And now that God gives us that grace, what is our response? What has he called us to do? And how can we as a church body then carry out the role that God has intended for us?"

Schroeder says these are important questions to address as delegates determine the future ministry of the synod. "In times like this, we have to remind ourselves that no matter how things look around us, Christ's love is all around us; it doesn't change, and it doesn't go away," he says. "And regardless of the resources we have, our calling remains the same—to do the very

most we can and to seize every opportunity we can in the most faithful way we can."

And since that mission will not change, Schroeder says "Christ's Love, Our Calling" is more than just a two-year convention theme. "It's a beautiful summary of who we are as a church body and what this church body is built on," he says. "Really, it defines what we stand for both now and into the future."

Complementing the theme is a new synod logo—to be widely visible for the first time at the convention. "Long-time WELS members will recognize the distinctive shape of the traditional WELS cross, updated graphically to demonstrate our calling to spread the gospel to the entire world," says Joel Hochmuth, WELS director of communications. The logo carries the tagline "Christ's Love, Our Calling" and will be available for congregational use following the convention.

Hochmuth says that while a new theme and updated logo can be helpful in reenergizing our mission as a church body, "they can never take the place of our ultimate motivation—the gospel."

CONVENTION ESSAYS

This year, two major essays will be based on the new synod theme.

John Brenner, professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., will present on the first part of the theme, "Christ's Love."

He says his essay will focus on the efficacy of the means of grace. "The gospel is the power that brings people to faith, strengthens faith, and sustains us in faith," says Brenner. "I hope that people will be moved to a greater appreciation of and trust in the means of grace for their own lives and a greater understanding of the privilege and duty we have of sharing the gospel with others. God's Word never returns empty but always accomplishes what he intends."

Jon Schroeder, pastor at Faith, Sharpsburg, Ga., is presenting an essay on "Our Calling." He says his essay will talk about our calling as children of God, children of the reformation, and children of WELS. "Our Christian calling is a call to faith, to service, and to eternity," he says. "I hope that the essay will help people treasure the various callings God has given us and will encourage all of us to 'live a life worthy of the calling [we] have received' (Ephesians 4:1)."

CONVENTION WEB SITE

Find all of your convention information, including official business, news, video recaps, and live streaming video of the convention at www.wels.net/convention.

To get convention news delivered directly to your inbox, subscribe to "Together," the synod's e-newsletter, at <http://together.wels.net/subscribe>.

Synodical Council budget proposal shows cuts, options

At a time of economic difficulty across the country, delegates to the 2009 synod convention will have to wrestle with another important financial decision—approving the synodical budget for the next two years.

This operating budget will reflect an \$8 million reduction—from \$38 million to \$30 million or about 25 percent—in each year of the next biennium, 2009–2011, because of the continued downturn in the global economy. This downturn resulted in the loss of significant gifts to WELS from foundations and individual donors, as well as a decrease in commitments from congregations for 2009 Congregation Mission Offerings.

In its April meeting, the Synodical Council approved the final proposed budget that will go to the convention. This budget proposal includes cuts that will need to be made and a picture of how these cuts will affect each area of ministry (see below).

The budget offers two options—each

with significant cuts to all areas of ministry. The difference is under Option A, Ministerial Education receives \$1 million more than under Option B. Under Option B, World and Home Missions each receives \$500,000 more than under Option A.

According to WELS President Mark Schroeder, the Synodical Council decided to give the delegates two options because it recognizes that there are clear differences of opinion on this issue among WELS members. “Finally, the convention is the decision-making body,” says Schroeder. “The Synodical Council felt that the best way to exercise leadership was to equip the delegates to make a decision by informing them what the impact of each choice was.”

Both options will have long-term effects on WELS ministry. Under Option B, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, would close in 2010, leaving only one preparatory high

school, Luther Prep, Watertown, Wis., in WELS’ ministerial education system. “Historically, our two prep schools together have provided one-half to two-thirds of our pastor candidates,” says Schroeder. “If we only have one prep school, it will be absolutely vital to recover those numbers from the area Lutheran high schools.”

Under Option A, four more world missionary positions and seven more home mission positions would be eliminated than under Option B. “Hard work that has been carefully done and blessed, and careful efforts to build indigenous churches could potentially be undermined,” says Schroeder. “People who have been served with the gospel will not be as easily served or may not be served at all. Can we serve them in different ways? Can we rebuild those fields at a later date?”

He continues, “Both options have serious ramifications, and both options

The proposed 2009–2011 budget—for both Options A and B—calls for reductions across all areas of ministry. Here is a brief summary of those reductions:

World Missions

Option A

- 23.5 manpower positions unfunded; of the 23 positions, 15 existing missionaries will be recalled from the field, 4 vacant positions will not be filled, and 4 planned positions are now unfunded.
- 1 new field (Mozambique) unable to be entered as planned; all existing fields affected but still served at a reduced level.

Option B

- 4 missionary positions retained.

Home Missions

Option A

- 21 called positions (18 pastors

and 3 staff ministers) unable to be maintained; 2 are currently vacant.

Option B

- 13 mission fields likely to be lost.
- 7 of the 18 pastoral ministries retained.
- 6 of the 13 fields retained.

Ministerial Education National office

Options A and B

- Allows for only a minimum level of program maintenance at the four schools.
- Reduces financial assistance provided by the budget.

- 1 support staff position eliminated.

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Options A and B

- Removes several staff positions from the budget to be funded from non-budgetary sources.

Martin Luther College

Options A and B

- 25 faculty and staff positions (9.5 positions vacant) eliminated.

Luther Preparatory School

Options A and B

- 6 or 7 faculty positions and 5 support staff positions eliminated.

BY THE N

are filled with unknowns. This is why the decision will be a difficult one."

Either way, dozens of ministry positions—both administrative and

in the field—will have to be cut. Some of the reductions have already been made so that even more extensive cuts won't be needed in the future.

PREPARING FOR THE CONVENTION

WELS President Mark Schraeder offers advice to the 400 delegates that will be attending the 2009 synod convention:

- Pray for God's wisdom and guidance.
- Do your homework. Be as informed as you possibly can be on all of the issues.
- Talk to a lot of people. Get their input.
- Listen with an open mind. Don't farm opinions too strongly ahead of time.
- Above all, ask yourself, "How will the decision I make—according to all the wisdom and judgment that God gives me—be for the good of God's kingdom and the benefit of all the work we do as a synod?"

He also reminds WELS members about the important job these delegates hold: "Probably the thing [those at home] should remember during the convention is the weight that these men carry on their shoulders, the weight of realizing that they're making decisions that will affect the future of this church body for years to come. You can't see it, but it's there. During the convention, pray for them and ask God to give them the wisdom of Solomon and the desire to preserve and share the truth of the gospel."

Of course, what will happen in the future is unknown, but Schraeder says that decisions made at the convention will help to clarify the direction the synod will take in the next few years.

"It's natural to ask, 'Where do we go from here?'" he says. "There is no question that we need to begin planning for the future now, and some of that has already been taking place. But the really serious and meaningful planning can take place only after this convention makes some important decisions. Then, under God, we can join together to focus on the opportunities he gives for the spread of his gospel."

He continues, "This is a painful process. But what we have to remember is God's promise that, even in these challenges, he will bless us and he will bless the spread of his saving message."

NUMBERS

Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Option A

- 8 faculty and 6 support staff positions eliminated.

Option B

- In the first year of the biennium, the school is funded by a combination of reduced synod subsidy and BME special funds.
- In the second year of the biennium, the school is not viable, and all remaining faculty and staff positions are eliminated.

Parish Services

Options A and B

- Position of the Parish Services

administrator eliminated; 2 unit administrators and 4 support staff positions eliminated.

- Most ministry functions supported by special funds and fees.
- Retains Commissions for Parish Schools and Special Ministries as distinct entities with their own administrators; reconfigures remaining units of Parish Services into a new combined group to carry out the functions of Adult Discipleship, Youth Discipleship, Worship, Evangelism, and Parish Assistance.

Ministry Support Options A and B

- 15 positions eliminated, reducing called and hired staffing from 71 to 56 within the areas of Facilities, Technology, Leadership, Christian Giving, Communication Services, and Financial Services.

Other overarching factors included in the budget are a salary freeze, an increase in the health insurance deductible for synodical workers, and a re-amaritization of the synod's debt.

For a more complete picture of the budget and how cuts will affect WELS ministry, read the 2009 Book of Reports and Memorials, posted online at www.wels.net/convention.

*Option A gives Ministerial Education \$1 million more while Option B gives an additional \$500,000 to both Home and World Missions.

Ad Hoc Commission offers delegates much to discuss

One of the major items of business for delegates at the 2009 synod convention will be discussing and voting on the recommendations presented by the Ad Hoc Commission. This commission was authorized by the 2007 synod convention to analyze the synod's present problems and future potential and to propose comprehensive, long-term strategies to help the synod carry out its mission.

Since the 2007 synod convention concluded, the 11-member commission of pastors, teachers, and laymen has been studying issues related to finances, structure, direction, and short- and long-term planning. Members have been talking to areas of ministries, examining pertinent documents from the 2007 convention, and working closely with WELS President Mark Schroeder to develop their recommendations. An initial report was presented to the districts in 2008 and then finalized after members took district feedback into account.

With more than 60 recommendations to consider, convention delegates will have much to think about. Six different floor committees will be studying sections of the report and presenting resolutions for discussion.

Introduction/Preamble. "The first thing [delegates] need to do is work through the section on what we define the synod as and what we want the synod to do, because that's critical, especially in a time of support decrease such as we're in now," says Pastor Joel Voss, commission chairman and pastor at Resurrection, Centerville, Ohio.

Synod budget and finance. This section of the report discusses the fragmentation of the synod's financial resources and the overall synod budget process. Although the report does not include how the commission feels about the two budgets, Options A and B as proposed by the Synodical Council for the next biennium (see pp. 22-23), Voss says that the com-

mission may still weigh in with its thoughts on the proposals.

Strengthening congregations. "I think the strengthening of called workers and congregations is probably the most important [section]," says Voss. "The synod is only as strong as the congregations that are affiliated with it. We talk about the synod slightly declining in membership and in support. Well, that all starts at the congregational level. Using God's Word and his sacraments to strengthen God's people to share that Word with others—that's the way to turn this around." Items in this section include appointing another commission to study the size and number of districts, strengthening the circuit pastor system, and reconfiguring Parish Services.

Pursuing excellence. A four-year synod theological study and continuing education for called workers are the main topics in this area. While new continuing education programs are being developed to supplement those already in place, Voss says congregational support is key. "Mainly I would see it as congregations strongly encouraging their called workers to [take classes] and then providing the

support necessary—whether that's financial support or manpower."

Structure, conventions, communication. In this section, the commission looks at the make-up of the Synodical Council, the role of the first vice president, and the lines of accountability in leadership positions. It also examines the timing and length of the synod convention and the communication vehicles in place to keep WELS members informed.

Cost of ministerial education. Here the commission examines ways the synod can reduce how much students have to pay when they are studying to be called workers. "This is one of those proposals—probably along with redistricting—where we are asking for things to be done in a situation where we don't have the resources to do so," says Voss.

WELS' current financial situation (see pp. 22-23) was one of the commission's biggest frustrations, according to Voss. "Halfway through our work we had a budget surplus, and now we're looking at large cuts to balance the budget," he says. "We realize that in these financial times some of these recommendations can't be enacted. But we feel that they have merit and should be considered so that if or when the situation does change, they can be implemented."

A presentation by the Ad Hoc Commission during an open forum at the convention will give delegates an opportunity to ask questions and get more information about the commission's recommendations.

"I would hope that everyone would read this [report] at least once—probably twice—along with looking at both budgets that have been proposed. I think that's crucial," says Voss.

The Ad Hoc Commission's report can be found in the 2009 Book of Reports and Memorials, which is posted online at www.wels.net/convention.

Members of the Ad Hoc Commission:

Pastor Joel Voss, chairman
Pastor John Braun
Pastor Jon Buchholz
Mr. James Drexler
Pastor Vilas Glaeske (Conference of Presidents representative)
Mr. Ron Hillmann (Synodical Council representative)
Mr. Mark Neumann
Pastor Jonathan Schroeder
Teacher Greg Thiesfeldt
Mr. Danny Wehmeyer
Teacher Eric Ziel

Advisory:

Pastor Mark Schroeder,
WELS President

Assignments

At the Call Day service held at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., on May 21, 34 men received new assignments. Of the 42 graduates from the class of 2009, 30 received assignments. Three from the class of 2007 were assigned to new locations, one was assigned to a new position in his present field, and one deferred for a year. Two from the class of 2008 were reassigned to their present fields.

Backhaus, Jeremiah W., to Trinity, Omak, Wash.
Barkaw, David J., to Christ the Lord, Cottage Grove, Minn.

Biebert, Nathaniel J., to Nebraska Lutheran High School, Waco, Neb.

Bade, Adam M., to Riverview, Appleton, Wis.
Dermé, M. Jahn, to St. John, Lewiston, Minn.

Dalan, Aaron J., to First, Racine, Wis.

Enstad, Benjamin A., to St. John, Stearns Bay, Wis.

Gawel, Adam S., to graduate mission associate, East Asia

Headrick, Noah M., to Groce, St. Joseph, Mich.

Hartan, David T., to Zion, Morton, Minn.

Huet, Kelly B., to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.

Klein, Jonathan M., to Christ Our Savior, Rockford, Mich.

Kaelpin, Joseph D., to Abiding Faith, Pinehurst, Texas

Krause, Brad D., deferred for one year
Krause, Shane C., to St. Paul, Platteville/Foith, Lancaster, Wis.

Kruschel, Stephen M., to Groce, Geneva/Trinity, Grafton, Neb.

Kuehl, Stephen P., to Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.

Lahmann, Kirk E., to St. John, Burlington, Wis.

Laitinen, Jeremy D., to St. Matthew, Benton Harbor, Mich.

Learnman, Jonathan A., to St. Peter, Thereso, Wis.

Lehmann, Stephen C., to Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Maua, Paa, to Foith Hmong Ministry, Anchorage, Alaska

Nitz, Adam F., to Zion, Mount Pleasant, Mich.

Parsans, Mark R., to Christ the King, Port Charlotte, Fla.

Redfield, Timothy J., to St. Paul, Litchfield/St. Peter, Darwin, Minn.

Rasenau, David R., to St. Mark, Leesburg, Fla.

Scharf, Nathanael R., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Schraeder, Andrew B., to Holy Redeemer, Port Huron, Mich.

Schraeder, Mark J., to Tree of Life, Cory, N.C.

Schumann, Aaron D., to Luther Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis.

Stelter, Jahn M., to Our Savior, Harrisonville, Mo.

Suttan, Joel T., to Lutheran Church of the Open Bible, White River, Ariz.

Thao, Thomas Changchika, to St. Paul Hmong Ministry, Appleton, Wis.

Weinkauff, Brian S., to Natianol, Calumet, Mich.

Winkel, Nathaniel J., to Immanuel, Hadar, Neb.

District news

Arizona-California

First worship services were held May 10 at **Shepherd of the Hills, Las Vegas**—one of six new congregations established last year with the assistance of Home Missions. More than 120 people attended. Of the 100 first-time visitors, about one-third were existing prospects; the rest were new faces who had seen flyers, mailings, and newspaper ads.

Northern Wisconsin

Jonathan Witte, an eighth-grader at Faith, Fond du Lac, Wis., was recently named a Wisconsin State Champion in a national handwriting competition.

South Atlantic

Christ the King, Palm Coast, Fla., held a groundbreaking for its new church and school on April 19.

Southeastern Wisconsin

The Gardens of Hartford, the newest assisted-living community from **Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service, Inc.**, held its grand opening on June 13. The facility is located across the street from Peace, Hartford, Wis.

Happy anniversary!

MN—Seven Martin Luther College professors celebrated anniversaries of service to the church on April 26—**Joyce Schubkegel** (50 years), **David Gosdeck** (40 years), **Lyle Lange** (40 years), **Mark Lenz** (40 years), **Dan Balge** (25 years), **Ken Rupnow** (25 years), and **Brian Dose** (25 years).

SA—Members of Bay Pines, Seminole, Fla., are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their church with six special services during 2009.

The district reporters for this month are: CA—Hermann John; MN—Jeffrey Bovee; NW—Joel Lillo; SA—Christopher Kruschel; SEW—Scott Oelhofen.

South Atlantic



The Easter worship service of Amazing Grace, Myrtle Beach, S.C., included the baptism of six children and one adult.

CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Adrian, Frederick S., to Hope, Hartford, Mich.
 Edenhauser, Kenneth R., to retirement
 Grunewald, Kurt L., to retirement
 Ibisch, Paul A., to retirement
 Krueger, Silas R., to retirement
 Kurth, John H., to retirement
 Learman, Timothy D., to Trinity, Lake City/
 Living Word, Plainview, Minn.
 Mielke, David C., to Christ, Oakley, Mich.
 Muske, Scott A., to St. John/Emmanuel,
 Fairfax, Minn.
 Nelson, James D., to St. Luke, Pickwick, Minn.
 Schroeder, Carl J., to St. John, Boraboo, Wis.
 Siegler, Paul L., to retirement
 Spiegelberg, Thomas C., to retirement
 Steljes, John, W., to Greenwood Exploratory,
 Greenwood, Ind.
 Styx, Randall D., to retirement
 Trimmer, Newton K., to Atonement, Baltimore,
 Md.
 Warnke, Richard E., to retirement
 Weigand, Martin R., to Zion, Osceola, Wis.
 Wempner, Timothy D., to King of Kings,
 Gordon Grove, Calif.
 Walfgramm, Arna J., to retirement

Teachers

Bare, Kathryn M., to Shepherd of the Valley,
 Westminster, Colo.
 Baures, Gregory J., to West Lutheran
 High School, Plymouth, Minn.
 Bilitz, Daniel E., to retirement
 Bahlmann, Steven J., to Atonement, Milwau-
 kee, Wis.
 Cares, Stephanie N., to Trinity, Kiel, Wis.
 Clemans, Benjamin P., to Mt. Lebanon, Mil-
 waukee, Wis.
 Clemans, Karyn M., to Mt. Lebanon, Milwau-
 kee, Wis.
 Fiecka, Destinee R., to St. Peter, Mishicot, Wis.
 Friedrichs, Amanda K., to St. Philip, Milwau-
 kee, Wis.
 Gnawuch, Mark A., to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
 Gadow, Tamara L., to Grace, Portland, Ore.
 Graf, Terrence A., to Salem, Stillwater, Minn.
 Grukke, Amy J., to Our Savior, Grafton, Wis.
 Hagenaw, Jason K., to St. John, Wrightstown,
 Wis.
 Jaspersen, Jennifer R., to Prairie Middle
 School, Fairfax, Minn.
 Juergens, Sarah J., to Christ Preschool, Bison,
 S.D.
 Kramer, Theresa J., to Trinity, Koukauna, Wis.
 Lemke, Cindy M., to Prince of Peace, Taylors-
 ville, Utah
 Lindenberg, Rebecca J., to St. John, Wau-
 watosa, Wis.
 Laberger, Elizabeth A., to Good Shepherd,
 Omaha, Neb.

Neitzel, Jean K., to retirement
 Nemitz, Rachel M., to Family of God, Fort
 Mohave, Ariz.
 Pelzl, David J., to retirement
 Pertsch, Daris R., to Mt. Lebanon, Mil-
 waukee, Wis.
 Prange, Leanne M., to St. John, Burlington,
 Wis.
 Riesap, Reginald C., to retirement
 Schaefer, April M., to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson,
 Wis.
 Schleusener, Lynelle, to Apostles, San Jose, Calif.
 Steinbarn, Ruth, to Growing in Grace Child-
 care, Le Sueur, Minn.
 Wagner, Rebecca L., to Roots to Wings
 Learning Center, Lake City, Minn.
 Wegner, Kristine L., to Mt. Lebanon, Mil-
 waukee, Wis.
 Westenberg, Ann C., to Trinity, Marshfield, Wis.
 Wetzel, Rebecca S., to Risen Savior, Milwau-
 kee, Wis.

ANNIVERSARIES

Grant Park, Ill.—St. Paul (140). July 12.
 Worship, 9:45 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP
 requested. Worship, 3 P.M.; refreshments to
 follow. Web site, www.stpaulgrantpark.net.
 Newburg, Wis.—St. John (150). July 12.
 Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; presentation
 between services and meal following the
 second service. 262-675-6640.
 Valentine, Neb.—Zion (75). July 18.
 Worship, 11 A.M. & 5 P.M. Site, Cherry
 County Fairgrounds. Meal at noon. July 19.
 Worship, 10 A.M., at Zion. Mott Krenke,
 mskrenke@hotmail.com.
 Balaton, Minn.—St. Peter (125). July 19.
 Worship, 10:30 A.M.; catered meal to fol-
 low. Mark Zonder, 507-734-2309.
 South Haven, Mich.—St. Paul (125). Aug. 2.
 Worship, 10 A.M.; dinner to follow. 269-
 637-1497; phonsen18@verizon.net.
 Billings, Mont.—Apostles (40). Aug. 16. 406-
 556-7141. Web site, www.opostlesmt.net.
 Indianapolis, Ind.—Divine Savior (40). Aug. 30.
 Worship, 8 & 10:45 A.M.; church bell
 dedication prior to each service. Sept. 20.
 Worship, 8 & 10:45 A.M.; meal to follow.
 James Schulz, schulzjg@sbcglobal.net.
 Bellevue, Wash.—Colvary (50). Sept. 20.
 Worship, 9:30 A.M.; reunion gathering,
 10:45 A.M. Sept. 27. Worship, 9:30 A.M.;
 picnic, 11:30 A.M.; organ recital, 3 P.M. Sub-
 mit personal memories in picture or story
 at www.colvarybellevue.shutterfly.com.
 Password: colvary.
 Tacoma, Wash.—Faith School (50). Oct. 10.
 Worship, 4 P.M.; meal, 5:30 P.M. RSVP
 requested by Sept. 10. 253-537-2696;
 office@faith-wels.org.
 Marton Grave, Ill.—Jerusalem school.
 Celebrating a century of Christian educa-
 tion. Oct. 9–11. Web site, www.jerusalem.lutheran.org/jels100.

COMING EVENTS

Crown of Life Gospel Choir "thank you" can-
 cert—July 6, 7-8:30 P.M. Siloah, Milwaukee,
 Wis. Keith Tullberg, tullberg@sbcbglobal.net.
 Lutheran Pioneer Adventure Activities—
 Aug. 2–8. 350-mile bike trip, beginning at
 the Lutheran Pioneer Home Office,
 Burlington, Wis. Dale Lorfeld, 262-534-5124;
lpexcdi@tds.net.
 Operation Science Summer Teacher
 Trainings—July 22–23. Wisconsin Lutheran
 College, Milwaukee, Wis. bethweid@operation-science.org. Web site, www.operation-science.org.
 Martin Luther College reunion weekend—
 July 24–26. Register online at www.mlc.reunion09.eventbrite.com. 877-652-1995
 ext. 387. Web site, www.mlc-wels.edu.
 Pastors' Wives Power Saturday—Aug. 1.
 New Life, Shoreview, Minn. Theme: "Wives Alive." Valerie Johnson, 612-267-
 3017. Web site, www.pwrenewal.org.
 St. Paul, Seaford, Minn., closing services—
 Aug. 9. Worship, 10 A.M. & 1:30 P.M.;
 catered meal, 11:30 A.M. Delbert Kuehn,
 507-342-5748.
 Christian Educators for Special Education
 Conference—Aug. 11, 8:30 A.M.–3 P.M.
 Klemmers, Milwaukee, Wis. Lunch included.
pleifer@peccehortford.org.
 Prayer conference—Aug. 14–15. Wisconsin
 Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. Hosted
 by WELS Prayer Institute. Web site, www.welsprayerinstitute.com. Click on events.
 North Atlantic District Labor Day retreat—
 Sept. 5–7. Camp Iconic, Hinsdale, Mass. Judy
 Becker, 518-872-1372; judibeck5@aol.com.
 Web site, www.welslabordayretreat.org.
 Friends of the Seminary Day—Oct. 3, 8
 A.M.–1 P.M. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary,
 Mequon, Wis. Lori Guse, 262-242-8104;
gusel@wis.wels.net.
 WELS Church Librarians' Organization fall
 conference—Oct. 3, 9:30 A.M. Immanuel,
 Monticello, Wis. Betty or Howard Wils-
 mann, 920-682-5351; jhbwilsmann511@sbcglobal.net.
 Martin Luther College Ladies Auxiliary
 annual meeting—Oct. 14. Registration,
 9 A.M. Meeting, 9:30 A.M. Martin Luther
 College, New Ulm, Minn., 507-354-8221.

NAMES WANTED

Kenasha, Wis.—Compus ministry for
 UW—Parkside and Cortage College.
 Kevin Hundley, 262-652-3574.
 Pastors and missionaries traveling to
 Hawaii—guest quarters available free 30
 minutes from the Kono International Airport
 on the island of Hawaii. Michiko Sato, 808-
 325-1035; lucymichiko@netoscope.net.

To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210;
bulletinboard@wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks
 before publication date. View an updated bulletin
 board at www.wels.net/jump/bulletinboard and
 a calendar at www.wels.net/jump/calendar.

Picture This



Andrew Schroer, pastor at Redeemer, Edna, Texas, shares Redeemer's Ascension tradition: "I give the children helium balloons after the service and then we go outside and let them go. I have found that this is a nice object lesson for the kids to see what it was like for Jesus' disciples as they watched him go up into the sky. The picture is of the children and myself after our Spanish service. Unfortunately, due to a gust of wind [and a nearby tree], not all of our balloons made it up to heaven!"

Submitted by Andrew Schroer

Send pictures to Picture This, *Forward in Christ*, 2929 N Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee WI 53222; fic@sab.wels.net. On a separate sheet, give us information about the photo. Those whose photos are chosen will receive a small gift.

DON'T KEEP THIS MAGAZINE!

You may recall in previous issues that we encourage you to share your copy of *Forward in Christ* with your friend or neighbor or even to leave it in a public place for someone else to discover. Sarah Bauer, a member at Pilgrim, Mesa, Ariz. recently shared how doing this can make a difference. She writes:

In a recent issue, you published the story of John and Trisho, former Mormons in Idaho who have now come to faith [Feb.]. I volunteer with Truth In Love Ministry (our mission to the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), and one of my jobs is to answer feedback that we receive through our Web sites. The following is an e-mail I recently received:



I was reading the magazine called *Forward in Christ* while sitting in the surgery waiting room at Covenant Hospital in Saginaw, Mich., and came upon the article entitled "Confessions of Faith." I noticed right away the word *Mormon* because I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I read the article with more and more disbelief—if you believe everything that John and Trisha told you about the LDS church, I've got a bridge to sell you! My husband and I have been members for 43 years, and the church she was talking about didn't sound like the one we belong to. They apparently didn't learn anything while there. We are CHRISTIANS, hence the name of the church . . .

I remember reading in previous FIC issues your encouragement of leaving your FIC issue behind for someone else to read. I have done this myself, and I was happy to learn that others are doing it too. As you can see, it does serve as a witness. Since that woman read that article, she was compelled to contact our ministry and I was able to witness the true gospel to her—that salvation is a free gift to those who believe, not something that we must earn. Now God can work in her heart, and maybe she will come to faith someday.

Thanks, FIC! God's blessings on your work.

Thank you, Sarah, and all those who share the magazine.

I was watching the History Channel recently. It was showing a full week of two-hour shows exploring the apocalypse and armageddon.

You don't have to watch television "entertainment" shows, however, to have your thoughts focus so dramatically on those themes. We hear so many news stories that draw our attention to the possibility of catastrophic conflict or even the end of time. Iran seems to be fomenting the war between Palestine and Israel. Syria sends weapons into Lebanon. Instability increases in Afghanistan. Pakistan and India are at each other's throats, and they both have nuclear weapons. An increase in the number of earthquakes may foreshadow the eruption of a super volcano in Yellowstone. A cholera epidemic kills thousands. Millions are starving. People are rioting in cities around the world. And we are in the midst of a global economic collapse. Any reasonable person might say, "It's time to panic!"

Or is it? Granted these current events all seem to reflect the general signs of the end times that God has given us in Revelation. Yet haven't all of these events occurred before? How can we tell if this time it is the real thing—the end of the world—or if these are just more precursors?

God's Word has convinced me—it doesn't matter! Not, that is, if you are ready.

We worry during troubled times

During a recent Bible study of 1 Peter, our pastor told us to read through the book and choose one passage to memorize. This is a good way to read and study any book of the Bible. It permits you to focus on a particular element, rather than trying to thoroughly digest every nuance in the book.

So I read. The problem I ran into was that there are so many words of wisdom in 1 Peter that I found it hard to choose which one to memorize. Then I read 1 Peter 4:7. I was compelled to read it again. And again. "This is it," I thought. "This is what I need to remember."

In this passage, Peter says, "The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray." How imminent did Peter think the end of the world was? Peter thought it was near. But from our perspective, it obviously wasn't all that near. We're still living our lives as we always have.

Perhaps that's the problem. We're still living our lives as we always have. So when something bad happens, especially if life hands us one bad "something" after another, we most likely do what we are conditioned to do—panic!



When troubling times are upon us—either personally, as a country, or globally—certain external influences reinforce that panic. We may see cartoon characters pulling their hair. We may hear stressed-out people saying, "What am I going to do?" or "I can't even tell you how bad my situation is." With some, depression may gain control over their heads and their hearts. Others may turn to drugs or alcohol so they don't have to think about their problems.

We need to pray for God's sustaining hand

Peter gives us an alternative to panic. Think about it this way: Do you remember taking tests in school? You did your homework. You studied hard every night. You studied even more just before the test because this test was especially important to you for some reason. As a result, when the test was placed in front of you, your thinking was clear. You were in control. You were equipped to fight off the panic and take the test.

Not time

WINE FLU
IDEMIC
EADING
on Wall St.
e big losses
lowest level since 2003
to panic!

Jesus said there would be wars and rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes. Was he reading today's headlines? Instead of worrying about the end times, we need to find calm and peace in his promises.

Betty Pfeiffer

Peter's words encourage us with a similar approach: "The end of all things. . . ." Yes, the end of time is coming, but there are other ends of things too. Nothing stays the same. Sometimes things are wonderful, and sometimes they're not. If you remember that sooner or later everything in life comes to an end—if you are prepared to expect changes—then you won't panic, whether the changes occur in your own life or in the world. Rather, you can "be clear minded and self-controlled," which is exactly the opposite of panic.

God may be providing us these foretastes of the end times so that we can practice preparing ourselves. Think of them as the minor quizzes before the big test. We can practice being "clear minded and self-controlled so that [we] can pray" instead of panic. Preparation enabled us to answer test questions and resist going into panic mode when we were students. In this passage God teaches us, as students of his Word, that we must settle our minds enough to pray to him for help and for his sustaining presence whenever terrifying circumstances arise in our lives. This is a test we have good reason to want to pass!

So, whether this time in history is just a practice quiz or the final exam, we should constantly pray that

- when troubling times come, we will not panic; we will be clear minded and self-controlled;
- we may serve as a calming, stabilizing example to other believers so that they won't panic but join us in prayer;
- God will use us to help panicking unbelievers learn of the peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace found in the saving grace of Jesus Christ; and that
- we remember to give thanks to God for extending the time he grants us to do his work.

Christ might return again while we are still alive. What a glorious experience that will be. Or if we are taken to be with him in heaven before the Last Day, we'll still be part of the host arrayed in white—a joyous celebration with those saints who preceded us.

So whether the best of times or the worst of times mark our lives, it is never time to panic! It is our time to be clear minded and self-controlled so that whatever happens, we are at peace with Jesus.

Remember—*memorize*—Jesus' own promise: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Betty Pfeiffer is a member at Heritage, Gilbert, Arizona.



A new life

The Lord continued to provide for a woman with liver cancer, even when doctors said she was out of options.

Laura C. Schaefer

“You’re out of options.” In a society that offers choices in every category from grocery stores to careers and from fashion to health care, we don’t like to hear that we are out of options.

Many of us know the extra sting those words carry when they come from a physician who is caring for a loved one or oneself. Sandy Arndt experienced that sting as doctors at two different hospitals turned her away. The further treatment of her liver cancer was too risky. They told her pointedly, “You’re out of options.”

As Arndt’s story goes, however, she did have options. But even before a new doctor gave her medical hope, she was prepared for whatever the Lord had in store for her. She knew that she had a God who had saved her from a dead end worse than this—not just death, but the hell her sins deserved. Yes, she knew that God did not leave her without options. She knew that even though she was a sinner, she had one who speaks to the Father in her defense—Jesus Christ, the perfect one. She believed that Jesus sacrificed his life to give her heaven instead of hell. She was sure that since God could be trusted with her eternal welfare, he certainly knew what was best for her health and earthly life.

You see, Arndt is a believer. And although she acknowledges that she did not feel ready to die, she also says that “knowing and believing in God prepared me for this and any challenge.”

It’s all about trust. She trusted God’s promises of eternal life in heaven and then asked for God’s gift of health, if it was his will.

Arndt’s health struggles began back in 2004. “I had a heavy feeling above my stomach area—mostly when I walked,” she says. “When I mentioned it to my doctor, she had it checked out with an ultrasound and a biopsy. The biopsy came back as being malignant. I was scared, and I didn’t know what my future held.” This was the beginning of Arndt’s four-year struggle with liver cancer.

Throughout her treatment, Arndt continued to work full time at her job at Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) in Milwaukee. She usually took off Tuesdays. That was chemo day. While her body was continually tired, she did not experience the other problems associated with chemo or additional symptoms from her failing liver. The Lord was compassionate.

After five months of chemotherapy, though, Arndt’s doctors concluded that her tumor was unresponsive—it was not shrinking. While this news was certainly difficult to bear, Arndt’s Christian support system helped to sustain her. From her husband, sister, and children to her best friend of 45 years, she was surrounded by the people God had put in her life to help her on this journey. Her church family and coworkers at NPH were also always there when she needed encouragement.

“They all remembered me in their prayers and were always concerned as to how I was doing,” Arndt reflects.

Backed by her family, friends, and most important, her Savior, Arndt shares that she was “always in good spirits. I might have thought, ‘Why me?’ but then I would think, ‘Why not me?’ Maybe there is something to be learned here.” Her friends kept her spirits up, and the Lord kept her faith strong.

Over the next four years of treatment, Arndt learned to trust and to pray more deeply. She went in for a CT scan every three months. This past summer, the growing tumor began to pressure major arteries, weakening her body and forcing her back into the hospital. The problems seemed to be getting worse. While she seemed to be out of options, family members urged her to seek another doctor’s opinion.

With the new doctors came new hope. Dr. Sahajpal identified Arndt as having a rare, slow-growing form of cancer. “Just seeing her tumor and how long she had been living with it and that it hadn’t progressed outside her liver, I thought she was a favorable candidate to pursue another option,” Sahajpal explains.

It was September 2008 when Arndt was offered a liver transplant. She and her family were overjoyed! A new option sprang up where none existed before.

Arndt's declining health put her at the top of the transplant list, and a suitable organ was available within two weeks. "I thanked God for the opportunity for a new life, and I also prayed that the person's family who donated this liver was comforted in their time of loss," Arndt recalls.

Within days after her 10-hour surgery, Arndt's physical therapists began her on a regimen to get her up and walking. Encouraged by her family, she was strong enough to go home in a few weeks.

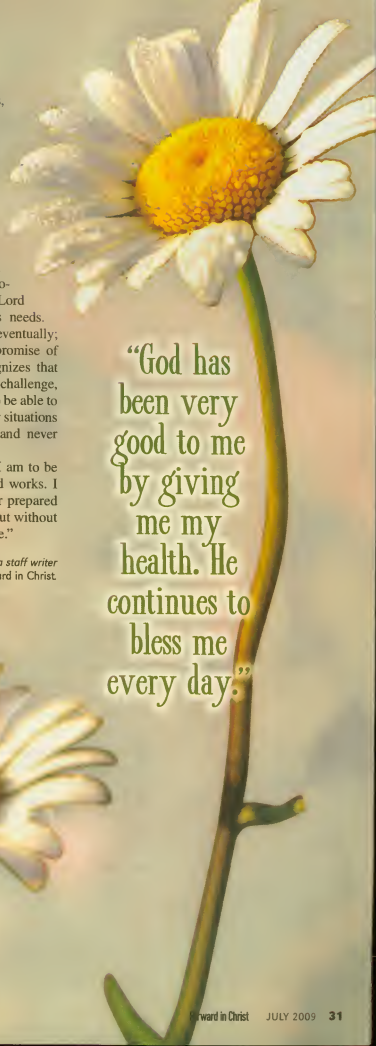
Several months after her surgery, Arndt tells about her life: "I am usually happy and enjoy doing things with my family. [She and her husband Bill have two children and three grandchildren.] I enjoy working outside—planting flowers and doing their upkeep. I'm fond of just sitting in a comfy chair and enjoying the nice warm summer days. You don't always have to be busy to enjoy life. I am enjoying life more now because I feel good and want to gain strength so I can do more. God has been very good to me by giving me my health. He continues to bless me every day."

Arndt's case attracted attention throughout the region, primarily because liver cancer patients are rarely considered candidates for transplants. Although hesitant to use the word *cure* when it comes to cancer, Arndt's doctors say it is unlikely the disease will return. The new option opened up new opportunities for an extended life and more time here on earth.

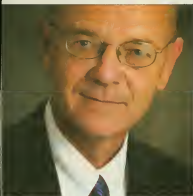
According to Dr. Steers, one in the team of doctors working on Arndt's case, Arndt's story shows that "a diagnosis by itself doesn't always mean that you're out of options." As a Christian, Arndt finds even more meaning in this lesson than what is on the surface. She learned through this personal, emotional experience that the Lord provides for his children's needs. She knows her life will end eventually; she trusts in the Savior's promise of eternal life. She also recognizes that by guiding her through this challenge, the Lord has equipped her to be able to "lead other people in similar situations to seek a second opinion and never give up hope."

She continues, "I guess I am to be a spokesperson of *his* good works. I don't know that one is ever prepared to face situations like this, but without God, it would be impossible."

Laura Schaefer is a staff writer for Forward in Christ.



"God has been very good to me by giving me my health. He continues to bless me every day."



Mark Schwaben

A future in God's hands

On the surface, it appeared to be perhaps the darkest time in the history of God's people. Long before, the chosen nation of Israel had fractured into two nations, with Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The Northern Kingdom had since been conquered by the empire of Assyria. Israel's leaders and citizens had been dragged from their homeland. Those who survived were scattered across the empire, never to return again.

And now another catastrophe. The kingdom of Judah seemed to be facing the same fate. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had completed his conquest of Judah, and many of its people had been forcibly removed to Babylon. The future looked bleak. The situation seemed to hold little hope.

But God was not through with his people. In spite of their habitual unfaithfulness, God would let nothing stand in the way of the promise he had made long ago—a promise not just to Israel but to all people of all time. He had promised that from this nation he would send the seed of the woman, a descendant of Abraham and son of David, to save his people from their sins.

But it didn't look that way. They were far away from their homes and looking at a future that appeared to leave no room for the fulfillment of God's promises. As they were about to give up all hope, God spoke to them through the prophet Jeremiah: " 'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future' " (29:11).

During the last nine months, our synod has faced difficult challenges. We've been jarred by an economy that turned dramatically and suddenly south.

We've seen congregations struggling to carry out their missions in the face of financial difficulties and membership losses. The synod convention that meets later this month will face some very difficult, even heartrending decisions. The world we live in presents challenges to our faith and to our desire to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. The temptation will be to lose heart and to waver in our hope for the future.

But the same God who reminded the exiled Jews of his promises and his faithfulness also extends similar assurances to us. Regardless of how things may look, he has made promises to us that he simply will not forget. He has promised us daily assurance of our forgiveness in Christ. He has promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us. He has promised that the gates of hell itself will not overcome his church. And he has promised that he will continue to bless the preaching and teaching of his Word until Jesus returns again. The words he spoke to his ancient people are words that he still speaks to us today: " 'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.' "

As 400 delegates from across the country prepare to assemble in Saginaw, Mich., for our synod's convention, please keep them in your prayers. Ask God to give them wisdom. Ask God to give them patience and Christian love as they debate difficult issues. But most important, ask God to keep their eyes and hearts fixed on his unbreakable promises. As God answers those prayers, he will bless our convention, and he will continue to use us as his witnesses.

believe in the HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is God. Charles F. Degner

Just as we say “God the Father” or “God the Son,” we also say “God the Holy Spirit.” We confess with these words that the Holy Spirit is God and equal to the Father and the Son. We think nothing of making this confession. Even my two-year-old daughter can say, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

But not everyone believes this. If you read any literature from the Jehovah’s Witnesses, you will notice that they spell the name with small letters (“holy spirit”). They believe that the Holy Spirit is just a force that comes from God.

One God, three persons

A story in Acts shows us in a dramatic way that the Holy Spirit is a person and that the Holy Spirit is God.

“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.

“Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God’” (Acts 5:1-4).

Peter said that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit. You cannot lie to a rock. You cannot lie to your big toe. You cannot lie to your dog. You can trick your dog, but you cannot lie to your dog. You can only lie to a person. Ananias could lie to the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is a person—one of the three persons of the triune God.

Peter said that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit. Then he said that Ananias lied to God. Imagine that I said to you,

“I can’t find my wife. Have you seen Linda?” You would assume that my wife is Linda. In the same way, if in one conversation Peter said that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit and also that he lied to God, then you can assume that the Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit intercedes for you

If you can speak to the Holy Spirit and lie to him, then you can also speak to the Holy Spirit in other ways. Specifically, you can pray to the Holy Spirit because he is God. “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (Romans 8:26,27).

Have you ever been in such a circumstance that you don’t know what you ought to pray for? Have you prayed at someone’s bedside and not known whether you should ask God to take them to heaven or heal them? When you don’t know, the Holy Spirit will help you.

He will make your requests to God so that they will meet your needs according to God’s will for you. The Spirit knows you from the inside out. The Spirit also knows the mind and heart of God. He can intercede for you in accordance with God’s will.

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This is the second article in an eight-part series on the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. Go to www.forwardinchrist.net and search by the author’s first and last name to read other articles in the series.



It's about money!

We seem to have an unwritten rule about what we can and can't say in the church. One of the rules states that we can't talk about money. If we do, we will stir up a hornets' nest. As a result, pastors don't often address the issue. A few do, but the rule remains for many. Church treasurers do—they know the bills have to be paid.

We even spend a lot of time talking about money without talking about money. We draft budgets and discuss what to include and what to cut. Sometimes those discussions become heated and difficult. We may even talk about salaries and whether we add or cut staff. All that discussion can be carried out without actually talking about money. Where will the money come from to carry out our ministry?

Whether we want to admit it or not, money is a good gauge of what is important to us. Someone once said, "Show me your checkbook, and I'll tell you what is important in your life." The children? Certainly! Food, clothes, housing? Absolutely! The mortgage must be paid, and we have to eat. The car? Yes, in our world we have to get from place to place. Now the question about which car or even which house is another question altogether.

Is the gospel important? The ministry of the church depends on the offerings of God's people. Ask any church treasurer who has to struggle to pay bills. How often do we have to defer the payment of some bills because the offerings were a little short this week or this month? It happens in every congregation. And it happens for the larger church, the synod, too.

In money matters, sometimes the sinful nature is just plain selfish. At times we need to hear the law. The prophet Malachi asked some tough questions of God's

people: "When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor!" (1:8). Or "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me" (3:8,9). Ouch. The law must have hurt their sinful nature. It hurts ours too.

But God's law is not the last word. The psalmist understood God's profound blessings: "For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living" (Psalm 116:8,9). His confession came from the work of the Holy Spirit through the gospel of God's love. It also prompted him to ask, "How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?" (116:12). He concluded, "I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD . . . in the courts of the house of the LORD" (116:17,19). His thankfulness was about money, a cheerful offering of gratitude for all the Lord's goodness. And God loves a cheerful giver.

Proclaiming the gospel in our local congregations takes money—our offerings. So does training the children—our own, our grandchildren, and the children of other families—in God's truth. Sharing the message of Jesus with the world and preparing a new generation of faithful called workers comes down to money too.

What shall we do? Motivated by the gospel, the apostle Paul says it clearly: "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income" (1 Corinthians 16:2). It's important.

THE APOSTLES

Jonathan E. Schroeder

Judas: Grace for every sinner

It was a common name that meant "praise." In fact, as many as three of Jesus' disciples might have shared the name. But then one night, evil swallowed a man whole, and he exchanged his Lord for a few bits of silver. His fall from grace was so tragic and so total that he ruined a good name forever. When was the last time you heard of a baby named Judas? The name that once meant praise thereafter brought scorn. What brought him to that point? How did he find himself so far from the grace of God?

READ LUKE 22:1-6,47,48

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. . . .

"While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'"

GIFTS OF GRACE

Identify gifts of grace that Jesus gave to Judas.

- Luke 6:12-16
- John 6:70
- Acts 1:16,17
- John 13:29
- Mark 5:41,42; 6:40-44; 6:48
- Matthew 10:1 (How often do we remember this one?)

CALLS TO REPENTANCE

God didn't stop at giving gifts of grace. Jesus also called Judas to turn from his path again and again.

Identify the calls to repentance Jesus gave to Judas.

- John 6:64-71
- John 12:4-8
- John 13:10,11; 13:21-27
- John 18:4-6
- Luke 22:48

LOVE SPURNED

He had sold his Lord for silver, but when he saw that Jesus was condemned, Judas "was seized with remorse" and said, "I have sinned . . . for I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matthew 27:3,4).

1. Look at Matthew 27:1. What did Judas recognize?
2. What events led to Judas' remorse?
3. Explain the difference between remorse and repentance?
4. How did the words of the religious leaders completely contradict the plan of God?
5. How did Judas' remorse lead to his suicide?
6. The message of Christ is one of law and gospel. What is the danger if one or the other is excluded?
7. Jesus gave many gifts of grace and calls to repentance to Judas. How is Judas a warning to us? A comfort?

MORE ABOUT JUDAS

The grace of God was never far from Judas. In his sad case we see God's grace for every sinner. Even our Lord's betrayer was shown the grace of God. To the very end, Jesus called on Judas to question his ways. In his betrayal and subsequent suicide, Judas typifies the worst of sin. But even our Lord's betrayer saw the selfless, seeking, all-consuming love of Christ. What a comfort to know that God loves the world. That means he loves me!

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This is the ninth article in a 12-part series on Jesus' apostles. Find this study and answers online after July 5 at www.forwardinchrist.net



Not alone on the journey



We are never alone.
God is with us every
step of the way.

Tammy Bernhard

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

It was my first road trip by myself. At the age of 30, I had never driven that far, for that amount of time, without anyone else along.

Traveling for my job, I made a 4-day, 12-hour round-trip drive to Minnesota. Arguably, it would not have been the idea of adventure for most, but it was for me. It was my journey, my independence.

My first trip alone

My life had always revolved around the presence of others. I grew up in one house my entire childhood and then married young. My husband and I moved into our first home together. A few years later, we started our family. I had literally gone from my parents' home to my husband's. Now I was a mother. I took on the responsibility and constant companionship of small, precious, dependent lives. I had never really been alone. So for me, this trip was about a freedom I had never quite known.

But I wasn't scared of being alone. I was excited! I was exhilarated! I was ready to take on the world. As I traveled the open road—okay, it was more like I-94 to be exact—I listened to the radio, not another Fischer-Price CD or a Disney soundtrack. I listened to rock and country stations, AM talk, even a Christmas CD, despite the October date. I drove for hours before stopping for fuel and was responsible only for my own bathroom schedule—no one else's. The inner strength I felt at that moment could have led me to reroof a garage or fix a leaking sink, neither of which I knew how to do.

What I didn't realize during this euphoric moment of domestic freedom was that I wasn't quite the mighty warrior woman I had thought. It was an illusion I had

built up in my own mind because things were going so smoothly. Nothing had gone wrong, and I had begun to attribute that to my own abilities. How dangerously wrong I had been.

My realization that I am never alone

Even though I had felt so overly confident in all I was doing—in reality, I carried a passenger with me. This passenger has been with me my entire life. What if I had gotten lost or had a flat tire? What if I had to confront the threat of danger face to face? Would that have been the moment I would have turned, acknowledged, and finally asked Jesus, my passenger in life, for help? The Bible tells us that "it is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect" (2 Samuel 22:33).

Sometimes it becomes so easy to get caught up with everyday victories and successes that we forget to recognize where our individuality really comes from. Now imagine seeking out the Lord first, before trouble is standing in our headlights. Imagine making that sales presentation, sitting in that doctor's office, or taking that first exciting trip—imagine a life with the Lord not just as your passenger, but as your driver, your map, your source of everything.

I have made that trek to Minnesota too many times since that first road trip. No longer am I the brash woman who thought she was driving an 18-wheeler in a world of scooters. Now I realize that I am a Christian woman. A Christian mother, wife, and worker who is confident in Christ and thankful for all he has done. It is only through him that my journeys will ever be complete.

Tammy Bernhard is a member at St. Peter, Theresa, Wisconsin.